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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
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Agenda item 2

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS, INCLUDING POLICIES OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION AND OF APARTHEID, IN ALL COUNTRIES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES: REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION UNDER COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION 8 (XXIII)

Written statement submitted by the International Association of Educators for World Peace, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[29 July 1997]

GE.97-13275 (E)

1. The situation of human rights in Tibet has been discussed by United Nations human rights and treaty bodies over the past many years - which is welcome. It must also be acknowledged that the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities and some treaty bodies have expressed their concern at the continued violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Tibet.

2. International Association of Educators for World Peace submits this written statement in the hope that United Nations human rights mechanisms, including the Sub-Commission, will not ignore the situation of human rights in Tibet. Scrutiny of the situation in Tibet by the United Nations is crucial because of the nature and persistent pattern of human rights violations in Tibet. As the Dalai Lama told the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 23 October 1996: "Violations of human rights in Tibet have a distinct character. Such abuses are aimed at Tibetans as a people from asserting their own identity and their wish to preserve it. Thus, human rights violations in Tibet are often the result of institutionalized racial and cultural discrimination. If the human rights situation in Tibet is to be improved, the issue of Tibet should be addressed on its own merits".

3. During the past year, our organization received numerous reports on the worsening situation of human rights in Tibet. Cases of arbitrary detention, disappearance, custodial death, summary execution, torture and unfair trial have increased while the Tibetan people continue to be denied their basic rights, such as freedom of speech, assembly, religion and movement. The continued incommunicado detention of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the Eleventh Panchen Lama of Tibet, is one example. The summary execution of 34 Tibetans in Tibet in 1996 in the name of the "Strike Hard" campaign and the sentencing of Ngawang Choephel, a Tibetan musician, to 18 years in prison on a so-called "spying" charge are other indications. The April 1997 sentencing of Chadrel Rinpoche to six years in prison for defending the true identity of the Tenth Panchen Lama's reincarnation is another example of how due process of law is suppressed in Tibet. The announcement 1/ by the Chinese authorities that 98 Tibetans were sentenced to prison terms in 1996 on charges of 47 political activities is another indication of the worsening of the human rights situation in Tibet.

4. Political and religious repression intensified in Tibet during the past few years, particularly in 1995 and 1996. A Tibetan NGO based in India reported that in 1996, 204 known arrests took place in Tibet; 1,018 (265 female and 50 under the age of 18) identified Tibetan political prisoners remained in prisons; there were 12 known cases of disappearance and 8 cases of Tibetan political prisoners dying as a result of torture and ill-treatment, including 3 custodial deaths; and 1,295 monks were expelled.

5. The political arrests in 1996 resulted from various campaigns launched in Tibet in early 1996 by the Chinese authorities. For example, as many as 110 arrests resulted from the "Strike Hard" campaign, under which "patriotic re-education" sessions were conducted in monasteries and nunneries in Tibet.

1/ Xizang Ribao (Tibet Daily), 3 June 1997.

In mid-March 1996, 25 students of the Ngarik Kyitselling School were detained in Kumbum in north-eastern Tibet after posters calling for Tibetan independence appeared at Kumbum Monastery.

6. The denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Tibet have been strengthened by China's refusal to allow international human rights organizations independent access to the country. Furthermore, those monitoring and gathering facts on human rights violations face severe problems as China considers the provision of any information that pertains to the current situation in Tibet as "leaking State secrets".

7. In recent times, the Chinese authorities have continued to carry out policies to deny economic, social and cultural rights to the Tibetan people. One clear example is the attempt by the authorities to create further obstacles to the study of the Tibetan language. In 1996, a decision was taken in the so-called "Tibetan Autonomous Region" to close a highly successful project in three secondary schools where Tibetan children were being taught in their own language instead of through Chinese. At Tibet University in Lhasa, for example, all except one of the University's 17 courses are now believed to be taught in Chinese, and although scholars have prepared textbooks in Tibet for primary and secondary schools, work on tertiary level textbooks has met with funding and bureaucratic difficulties. The University was established in 1985 with a propaganda to increase study of the Tibetan language. Recently one of the main committees on the Tibetan language was reportedly closed down, reports from Lhasa say.

8. In north-eastern Tibet, a Tibetan literary magazine was banned in early 1996 because one of the pages said: "We have compiled this in memory of our ancestors, who have written their history in blood so that progress might be made in our literature ... We have written this out of our love for the snow mountains". This magazine was published by students of Ngarik Kyitselling School at Kumbum Monastery. After detention, the whereabouts of Damchoe Gyatso, aged 27, the principal editor of this magazine, remained unknown in August 1996.

9. The situation of the implantation of Chinese settlers in Tibet and the policy of coerced birth control imposed on Tibetan women are directly threatening the very survival of the religious, cultural and national identity of the Tibetan people. It was, therefore, alarming when reports emerged last year that some 500,000 Chinese were to be moved into Tibet to work on copper mines and that the Chinese authorities planned to build several mining towns to house about 100,000 migrant workers.

10. During the Third Work Forum on Tibet held in Beijing in July 1994, the Chinese authorities publicly admitted a policy of population transfer to Tibet. It was officially stated that former soldiers, paramilitary troops, cadres, technicians and entrepreneurs from China were to be encouraged to move to Tibet through incentives provided by the Government. It had been previously stated in a leaked report of a top secret meeting held near Chengdu on 12 May 1993 that strategies would be adopted to "flood" Tibet with more Chinese settlers.

11. The increase in Chinese settlements in Tibet is creating new tensions between the Tibetans and the settlers. The social life of the Tibetans, particularly in major towns, has been assaulted by prostitution, cheap liquor, karaoke bars, pool tables, discos and Chinese music and movies. Unemployment among Tibetan youths is on the rise. Crime has increased, along with corruption. On the economic front, opportunities are being snatched away by Chinese settlers who have more connections and capital. Even after more than 40 decades of "peaceful liberation", Tibet under China has not been able to produce capable Tibetan professionals and experts. The region remains amongst the poorest in the world.

12. Over the past decade thousands of Tibetans, including children as young as six, have fled Tibet to escape from political, social and economic hardship experienced under Chinese rule. During the first half of 1997 alone, more than 900 Tibetans escaped Tibet to free themselves from political and religious persecution or to seek a better education in freedom as refugees. The growing number of new refugees from Tibet is another indication of how new policies initiated by the Chinese authorities are affecting the lives of the Tibetan people.

13. In a statement issued on 20 February 1997, after the demise of Mr. Deng Xiaoping, the Dalai Lama remarked: "Following Mr. Deng Xiaoping's statement in 1979, that apart from the question of total independence of Tibet all other issues could be discussed and resolved, I was hopeful that the issue of Tibet would be resolved during his lifetime. Encouraged by the overall changes in China and the new pragmatic attitude towards the issue of Tibet, I have, since then, consistently and sincerely made attempts to engage the Chinese Government in earnest negotiations over the future of Tibet. Sadly, the Chinese Government has not responded positively to my proposals and initiatives over the past 18 years for negotiated resolution within the framework stated by Mr. Deng Xiaoping. On my part, as soon as we receive a positive indication from Beijing, I am ready to enter into negotiations any time and anywhere without preconditions".

14. It is, therefore, necessary that the international community pay greater attention to Tibet and encourage China that it is in its best interest to resolve the Tibetan question through negotiations in the spirit of compromise and reconciliation. In conclusion, International Association of Educators for World Peace appeals to the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities to place the situation of human rights in Tibet on its agenda.